

Support the Focus on Family Health Worldwide Act of 2005



Mali women and their children with baskets of food.

What exactly does this bill do?

This legislation will authorize increased funding to family planning programs implemented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Specifically, this bill will increase authorized funding for USAID's voluntary family planning programs to \$600 million in FY 2007, and then by an additional \$100 million annually, over the next four years, reaching \$1 billion in FY 2011. The bill also prioritizes funding allocation to countries with acute family planning and maternal and child health needs, where contraceptive shortages are forecast, and to areas where high population growth rates and crucial biological diversity intersect.

What is the reasoning behind the Focus on Family Health Worldwide Act?

The need for family planning assistance has never been greater. This year world population will grow by more than 73 million people, and a billion people will be added to the world's population between 2000 and 2015 - most of them in the poorest and most environmentally vulnerable countries.

Voluntary family planning has profound health, economic, and social benefits for families and communities. Since its international family planning programs began 40 years ago, the U.S. has helped families worldwide to better feed, clothe, educate, and provide health care for their children. Family planning also enables couples to determine whether,

when, and how often to have children, which is vital to safe motherhood and healthy families. A growing, unmet need for modern contraceptives and health care in the least developed nations urgently requires renewed U.S. commitment to voluntary family planning programs.

What does international family planning have to do with natural resources?

International family planning is one of the most cost-effective ways to help countries reduce population pressures that cause environmental destruction such as loss of habitat and wildlife. Family planning helps preserve the environment by slowing rapid population growth and by freeing family assets to allow better management of the natural resources many families directly rely on for basic needs and family income.

Currently, more than 1 billion people live in ecological hotspots – areas that are both the planet's richest in biological diversity and highly threatened by increasing human activity. While these hotspots comprise just 12 percent of the Earth's land surface, they hold nearly 20 percent of global population. In fact, biological hotspots are experiencing population growth that is nearly 40 percent faster than population growth in the rest of world.

The good news is that we know what works.

Introduced by Representatives McCollum (D-MN), Oberstar (D-MN), Ramstad (R-MN), and Shays (R-CT) on November 1, 2005, the Focus on Family Health Worldwide Act of 2005 (H.R. 4188) bolsters U.S. international family planning assistance, which is vital to the health of families & the environment.

Supporting international family planning programs saves lives, money, and resources. Family planning slows population growth, which in turn enables developing economies to invest in hospitals, schools, roads, and sewage systems. By enabling child spacing, family planning works to strengthen the health of women and children. In Latin America, a \$1 investment in family planning saves \$12 in other health and related costs.

As population growth slows, and economies develop, investments in environmental protection and sustainable development become possible.

Past family planning investments by the U.S. Agency for International Development have delivered health care education and supplies to millions of people in more than 70 countries. As a result of U.S.-sponsored family planning programs, countries as varied as Mexico, Thailand, Korea and Tunisia have seen population growth rates slow and economic prosperity soar.

What will happen without increased U.S. support for family planning assistance?

Without increased and sustained funding to meet the growing demand for family planning, the popula-

tions of the 50 least developed countries will more than double by 2050. An additional 1.4 million infant deaths, 2.7 million child deaths, and 142,000 maternal deaths, all preventable, will occur annually. Rapid population growth and ensuing development will threaten water supplies, food security, and biodiversity, increasing the possibility of national and regional armed conflicts, famine, and the spread of water-borne diseases.

Why is increasing support for USAID voluntary family planning programs so important?

Voluntary family planning programs like those carried out by USAID are critical to improving health care, empowering women, and protecting the global environment. By gradually increasing funding for international family planning programs, the Focus on Family Health Act supports U.S. foreign policy, security, and humanitarian goals. Family planning reduces unintended pregnancies, helps prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, and ultimately can help conserve vital natural resources and minimize food insecurity. Family planning also reduces maternal death, improves the health of mothers, and dramatically reduces deaths of infants and children.

QUICK FACTS

- USAID's programs provide education and access to voluntary family planning in more than 60 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union at the host government's request.
- Currently, at least 120 million couples in developing countries would like to postpone their next pregnancy or have no more children, but do not have access to modern contraception.
- More than 1.7 billion women worldwide are in their reproductive years, between the ages of 15 and 49. Targeted investments in education, reproductive health, economic opportunity and gender equality can spur economic growth and sustainable development for generations to come.
- Education about and access to family planning enables families to space their children - allowing 2-3 years between births so the mother's body can recover. This reduces health risks and deaths for both mothers and children.
- Out of the top 20 donor nations, the U.S. ranks last in percentage of non-military international assistance, spending only .14% Gross National Income (GNI).

